

Regional Haze

Haze is primarily made up of very small particles suspended in the atmosphere. It can obscure the clarity, color, texture and visual form of distant objects through the absorption and scattering of light before it reaches the ground. Some haze-causing particles are formed when gases emitted to the air interact with other pollutants to form particles, e.g., ammonium sulfate and nitrate particles. Other haze-causing particles are directly emitted to the atmosphere as particulate and/or condensed liquid droplets. Manmade sources of haze-causing pollutants range from electric power generating plants to automobiles. Natural sources of haze-causing pollutants can include wildfires, volcanoes and animal husbandry. The same pollution that causes haze also poses serious health risks, especially for people with chronic respiratory diseases.

Section 169 of the Clean Air Act was adopted because of concern that the National Ambient Air Quality Standards and the new source permitting program might not adequately provide visibility protection to national parks and wilderness areas. The regional haze regulations apply to all 50 States, the District of Columbia and certain territories. The regulations apply regardless of whether one jurisdiction includes a Class I Federal area. Each jurisdiction will be responsible for determining what its contribution should be to ensuring reasonable progress in improving visibility in Class I Federal areas impacted by its emissions sources and for implementing appropriate emissions control strategies. It is the position of U.S. EPA that multi-state planning, modeling and control strategy assessments will be the preferred method in addressing regional haze in Class I Federal areas.

On July 1, 1999, U.S. EPA promulgated its regional haze regulations. The regional haze regulations concern visual air quality in the 156 national parks, wilderness areas, memorial parks and international parks that are designated as Class I Federal areas. Indiana has no Class I Federal areas, but Indiana sources may impact visual air quality in Class I areas. Class I areas nearest to Indiana are Kentucky's Mammoth Cave National Park and Michigan's Isle Royale National Park and Seney Wilderness Area. The regulations are for the prevention of future impairment to visibility and the improvement of existing visibility from manmade haze in these mandatory Class I Federal areas.

The Midwest Regional Planning Organization with Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Indian Tribes, and federal agencies was formed to study whether emissions from sources in this region contribute to regional haze in Class I Federal areas both inside and outside the region. Part of the regional haze study will consist of a regional network of visibility cameras. Indianapolis is one of the chosen visibility camera sites. Images will be available for viewing on line, along with near real-time monitoring and air quality data. Information on the work of this group can be found at:

<http://www.ladco.org/rpo/rpo.html>.